

[Buster (Dad) DeGraftenried]

Dist. #20 El Paso, Texas Folkstuff Range lore

ELLIOTT: PW

Buster (Dad) De Graftenried

Biography Three versions same story

March 15, 1938 2418 words BUSTER (DAD) DE GRAFTENRIED

Bronzed by the sun and wind, Dad De Graftenried is a real life model of the old time cowpuncher and ranchman. A fringe of snow white hair people out beneath an [old?] Stetson hat and his keen eyes twinkle with merriment while he relates adventures of pioneer days. His legs, bowed by sixty years in the saddle, were encased in fine hand made boots and he rolls a cowboy cigarette with the precision of a machine. His genial manner is typical of western hospitality as he receives visitors in the home of his daughter, Mrs. Frank O. Skidmore, where this story was obtained.

"Well now I'll be glad to talk with you about the old days. I enjoy going downtown and talking to some of my old friends for many of us are passing on. Take this for instance as the case were," and then he began:

"I was born in Grayson County, Texas, September 1864 on the old De Graftenried plantation. I remember the little negro kids and my man Berry, who carried me about on his shoulders until I was a fairly big lad. That plantation was home until Father got an urge to go farther west so we headed for [the?] frontier which later became Stephens county. It hadn't [been?] organized yet, but they had a big picnic and organized it with Breckenridge as the county seat. I can remember that part of it for the kids had plenty of fun. Several

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times we would go back to Grayson county but every time us kids would start "chillin" and Pa would put us in the wagon and start west again. We settled on the Clearfork of the Brazos. C12 - Tex. In front of our cabins we had things sorta like brush arbors and Mother used to hang quilts up so the Indians couldn't see us playing. I bet I've been chased a hundred times by the Indians and when asked why he didn't catch me I always tell them, "Well, H—, might as well try to catch a jack rabbit as to chase me.

I don't remember a lot of these things until I meet some old fellow and start talking and he says "do you remember so and so?" and that starts things popping in my mind. My old friend Cap'n John Hughes can remember so many things that happened while we lived on the Clearfork. He was a young man then in the Ranger Service. The Indians killed a family by the name of [Lee?] and I asked Cap'n Hughes if he remembered about it and he said "Well, I reckon I do, I went down there." Life was pretty strenuous for the grownups, but we had a lot of fun. We kids were happy. I can remember the first hat I ever owned was a cotton one, and when you rode your pony the hat all went to crown and you had to reach up and catch it and carry it in your hand the rest of the day. And that's about all we did was ride.

In [?] we moved to New Mexico about Ft. Sumner. There was just two white families there then, ours and Old Brother Gayhart who was German and as the cowboys said, he had quite a bunch of little Germans. We were settled right near the old home of Billy the Kid. He was killed the same year we moved to New Mexico. I think there were only two countries out there then. San Miguel and later we helped make Chavez County.

The first work I ever done, was with Caulsey in 1883-84 Caulsey was a freighting outfit. They had seven or eight wagons with seven or eight yolk of oxen to each wagon, and they had a bunch of extra steers. I was hired to drive the steers. This outfit hunted some buffalo and sold the meat, but there were only a few buffalo left in [1883?] so I worked for them that year and then they [played?] out.

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Those freighters were tough as could be. They tell this story. " One time an Indian was trying to buy a cannon from one of the Army's Generals and was told, "No you will be shooting my soldiers with it." The Indian said, "Me killum soldiers with stick, me want killum damn freighters". Now those freighting outfits were as fine as money could buy. They had to be since they were the only means of hawling supplies. The wagons were huge as this room, heavily built of oak and canvas with water barrels on the side. They had two men to each wagon and they certainly had team work. They all work just like one man. When there was an attack from the Indians within five minutes they would have the wagons in a circle with water barrels and the steers inside and they would have out their old buffalo guns and a whole army couldn't have gotten to them. The wagon boss always rode in front of the train. It was his job to see that the way was clear. If we came to a piece of timber he would ride in to see if there was any ambush. If he gave the signal, the wagons would move up and in no time the protection would be formed. When there was no Indian trouble they made camp much the same fashion at night. One wagon with the provisions would be in the middle where the cooking would be done. Then one of the boys would take the oxen out and let them graze all night. He was called the "nighthawk". I just wish you could have seen them hitching up in the mornings. Those old steers were well trained. There was always so much dust inside the circle you would wonder how the men ever got the right animals to the [wagon?], but they knew just where to go. They would come up and stand patiently in place, turn those old long horns sidewise, until the bow was in place and locked. They could hitch the right front oxen first, and then the next one would follow until they were all hitched, [then?] with a shout from the driver they would wheel that old wagon out of the circle and take their position ready for another long drive. I learned a lot from watching the freighters and their teams.

After that year I went to work for a little while for the Syndicate, up in the Panhandle country. They had the famous KIT brand. They were supposed to have furnished the money for the building or the capital building at Austin. I didn't work for them very long.

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Pretty soon after that I went to work for a Mr. Horn, who owned the Pig Pen outfit, and I stayed on that ranch for more than fifty years, I've been there ever since. I reckon I just helped to make that country. There was trouble in those days over the grass. The cattlemen and sheepmen had it. And the nesters, that's what we called the families that moved in on us. We couldn't agree about different things, but if ever a body was intitled to rights, By G— I was because I helped to make five counties. But H— you couldn't have law and order in those days. Most of the people can't understand that, for instance as the case were. "We lived about thirty miles from the Texas line on the [Pecos?] river and in [1889-90?] it hadn't rained for 5 three years to make any grass for the cattle and wherever there was any little grass the sheepmen came in and let their sheep eat all the grass from our cattle. The range was overstocked with cattle anyhow and there was no grass. That was what caused the sheepmen and cattlemen's war.

We were about a hundred miles from nowhere but the mail passed every day in a buckboard on the way to Las Vegas, so I wrote to Mr. Horn to ask him to come down and see if we couldn't fix up some way to save our cattle as they were all going to die if we didn't. Mr. Horn lived in Denver but he came to Vegas by train and it took him three days to come from Vegas to old Fort [Sumner?] in a buckboard. Things went better with him there. We fixed up a little spring, had a lot of hard work but the cattle got water.

I never had a case in court in my life, I just couldn't afford to get into any trouble in that danged sheepmen's war, but I've been a witness a lot of time. The easiest thing for me to do was to move my cattle back out of trouble. I always told my men never to kill anyone unless they had to and if they ever did never to come back around my place because I didn't want to get mixed up with the law. The best thing to do was just to head into Texas, go right off and never come back no more. I was a deputy sheriff in those days, but only for my own protection. Capn' Hughes knows about that time. He's just too good a man. He was on the laws side and he can't talk much. That's the reason he doesn't talk about his experiences and he could tell plenty. And another fine man is old Juan Franco. He is just

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about the cleanest Mexican cuss I [ever?] knowed in My my life. They are called Mexicans 6 in Texas but in New Mexico they are called Spanish Americans.

They always called me "Dad" since I was about 22. I worked over on the Matador for awhile and I met a girl I had knowed all my life, but I hadn't seen her for a long time. We fell in love and were married right away. She stayed there and I went back to the Horn ranch to make a stake, and the first thing I knowed, by jiminy I had a boy. It took a letter a month to get there. I strutted around there helping the boys, and was so proud I'd say "now let Dad do that", so from that time on they always called me "Dad". I was the only feller around them parts that had a kid that they [owned?]. They might of had plenty of them but they didn't own them.

The young hands was what we called " Buttons " if they didn't like to work very much. That was an old term used by the cowmen. One old boy came out to work for me, rode in about night on a little old poor pony and asked me about work. He was about 17 or 18 - I fitted him up with a bunch of ponies, and he turned out to be one of the best hands I ever had on my place.

You never asked a fellow his name and if he told you, you wouldn't believe it anyhow. This fellow had on a pair of what we called Hand-me-down boots, that is they were just bought in the store and not made to order. So we called him Boots. I had a man that had worked for me so long and was such a dependable man that I counted on him for everything. His name was Dallas. Well, one evening I looked out and saw a bunch of sheep up in our pasture so I says , "Where is Dallas ? I want him to go out there and drive them sheep out of that pasture. They said that they 7 didn't know , they hadn't seen him around that day. So Boots says , "Let me go and drive them away." So I let him go, I told him that if he got into any trouble not to [come?] back here so to take the best horse he could find. He started off but he never came back. Next day the sheriff came up and said that someone had run through this sheep camp [and?] tore it up, scared the sheep all off and set fire to the camp. He had a [mexican?] to indentify the person that done it . But the Mexican

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said it wasn't any of the fellers there. Well, I never heard what happened to Boots, for about two years. One day a letter come and said that he still had the pony and that he was sick and that he wondered if he had worked for us long enough to have anything coming. Well, I looked on the books, and shore nuff I owed Boots \$40.00, so I sent him a check for \$40.00. He just signed his name Boots in the letter so I made out the check to Boots and he signed it Boots and by golly he got the money. A few years later he came [past?] our place and stayed all night. on his way to Arizona in another big hurry. He sure was the right kind of fellow. He knew how to keep his mouth shut. He shore could have anything on that [ranch?]. He [just?] didn't talk too much. He was just a good cowboy. He had "slipped the button. " He did what you told him and never asked any questions about it.

When Mr. Horn died I bought the ranch from the bank at Denver, some of the older [cowmen?] would probably remember it better as the old [Tooley?] ranch or the Old Horn ranch. At one time I branded 7 or 8 thousand calves. That would call for between 16 or 17 thousand head of cattle. During the days that we [fenced?] three townships we had to haul the wire about [116?] miles and the [posts?] from "the [brakes?]", a distance of [60?] miles. [?] 8 The big freighting outfits bought brought all our supplies from Amarillo. Us old ignorant cowmen didn't know nothing about money only that we had most everything we needed that money could buy. The way we got our supplies was funny. There was a little store there in Fort Sumner which acted sorta like a bank and handled all our money and paid most all our debts. We were so ignorant we didn't know if they cheated us or not. " Now as the case were, " the bookkeeper in the store in Amarillo would say to one of the other men, "You had better look up and see when we took that stuff to the Pig Pen outfit (that was my outfit) and LFD outfit," and he would look it up and say, "Well, its been about three months since we was out that way and the Pig Pen outfit has so many men and the LFD outfit has so many, so I think we had better be getting out that way. The next thing we would know there would be a lot of barrels on the porch, maybe a thousand pounds of flour, 150 pounds of coffee and all other supplies that we needed. That would be the last we would know about it until the next time they sent us some supplies. They would

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collect for it at the little store in Fort Sumner as there were no banks in them days out in this country, nor schools like they have now. My wife stayed over at [Portales?], about 30 miles from the ranch so the kids could go to school. I've sold off most of the ranch now. Just kept enough to go back to in the summers. I like El Paso, but I get homesick and have to stay up there part of the time.

Buster (Dad) De Graftenried

Age 73

106 W. California Street

El Paso, Texas 1 ELLIOTT, P.W. Life History #20

JUN -6 1938

1750 Words MY PIONEER EXPERIENCES CONTRIBUTED

By

Buster De Graftenreid

In 1864 I come to Texas in Grayson County and from what my Pa and Ma said, I give up the squack and bawled like two years old and they named me Buster. Pa and Ma moved to Stephen County and my first recollection I have is herding a small bunch of our cattle to keep them together and no one steal or run them off.

I rode a little pony mare and she always had a cold every year. When I would start out with the cattle, after ma had milked, she would hand me my lunch, which was a pone of corn bread, and say to me "Now you be sure and be a good boy and stay on your pony. If you don't you will get to playing and the Indians will catch you," and I want to say now, that fear is still with me.

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Also what she told me about Jesus and God taking care of all good boys. She planted the thoughts of Jesus in my heart and His goodness has been with me these many years. C 12 - Tex.

What I want to say, is this, how those families got by, I can't see. There were three families lived on the Clear Fork of the Brazos River, it emptied its water in the main Brazos 2 River about thirty miles below.

Now, in looking back and even what I knew at that time, as I must of been 9 or 10 years old, my uncle John Selman, my mother's brother and his wife, my Pa's sister, lived with his family about half a mile away. I thought at that time, uncle John was everything and could and did things. If it had not been for uncle John and a few men like him, the [Comanchie?] Indians would of got all of us. Uncle John was a fighter and they knew it and so did those thieving white men. As the Indians killed the Lee family, the old man, old lady and carried off two grown girls and a small boy about seven years old.

Uncle John went with the soldiers which were at Fort Griffin, twenty miles up the Clear Fork River. Uncle John got the neighbors, a few cowboys and when they were digging the grave, some one found a young girl dead, shot in the back with an arrow. I heard uncle John say he couldn't pull the arrow out so he cut it off and bent it over. They put the three in on big grave, just wrapped up in some old quilts, the Indians wouldn't take. They took the feather beds and emptied the feathers out and took the ticking as they needed the cloth for their own use.

As it was only three miles below our house, I would take the cattle down that way so I could see the grave. My uncle John was a good man and stood for fair play. He went with the soldiers and different scouts after horse thieves.

I recall, one time, he come by where I was herding cattle. 3 Him and three soldiers, negroes. They had two white soldiers as prisoners. They had deserted and as uncle John

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knew the country, it seems the captain sent uncle John to get them. He had them tied together so they couldn't run in the brush and get away. They had one pack mule and it was heavily packed with grub and some bedding. I was sure sorry for the two men as they was walking while uncle John and the negroes were riding.

They didn't seem to care one bit as they were anxious. They said they were sure glad to see a white man if he did have three negro soldiers with him as they were about to starve and had to stay hid and afraid to shoot to kill anything to eat as they saw Indians. One of them said, "I have still got my hair and all I ask is to get back to the fort where I can eat and sleep in peace. The woods are full of Indians. We could see them in the day time and we would stay hid in the thick brush and briers. At night we could hear them grunt while looking for us."

I was always glad when uncle John was around as he had a good gun and would kill deer and turkey. The woods were full of them. In the winter he would kill hogs and what a time we would have, as my two brothers, Creed and [Dick?], was going to school at Fort Griffin.

Twenty miles in those days was all day in a wagon drawn by a big yoke of steers, big and fat. The steers belonged to Pa and the wagon was uncle John's. It cost money to get a wagon. Pa raised the steers and us boys broke them to work when they were yearlings, dragging wood to cook with and keep warm. When the wood played out so we couldn't keep a good fire, Pa would move to more wood. Good idea, he did not have to worry one bit, see? 4 I think my Ma was the only one that worried as she was afraid the Indians would get me or I would get lost and starve. She didn't know how smart her boy was. I could and did out smart the Indians. I know they didn't want to kill me. They either wanted to see me run and hide or wanted to catch me just to see what I looked like. They might have thought I was one of them as all I had on in the summer time was a shirt three or four sizes too big, no shoes, no hat and my hair down to my shoulders. I would give anything if I had a picture of myself as I can see now in my imagination when I was a boy.

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I never thought of getting lost as the milk cows would go back to the calves that were left in the pen and I would drive the others after them and get home in fine shape. If it hadn't been for one old line back, redheaded cow, we call old Nance, I don't know so much. When I got hungry I would suck her by milking the milk in my mouth, fill up on good warm milk as I had either eaten or lost my corn bread.

My uncle John would go to Weatherford in Parker County, eighty miles to mill, they called it. If he had good luck, he would get back in fifteen days, but it nearly always rained and the creeks would get out of their banks and he couldn't ford them. I remember one time he was nearly a month. Both families run out of meal. Not one bit of bread. We had plenty meat such as chicken, squirrel and rabbit. Ma would make curd out of clabber milk and lots of butter. We could catch any size fish you wanted within thirty minutes.

If you wanted a big fellow, fish deep with a big bait. The 5 big ones stayed on the bottom in water ten feet deep or more.

I remember Uncle John caught a big, yellow cat fish that weighed 123 pounds. That was the biggest fish I have ever saw.

My uncle John's wife, my aunt Edna, died in 1878 or 79. Uncle John left that part and moved his children, three boys and one girl up in the big ben country. My dad moved to Dickens County, and in 1882 Dad moved to New Mexico. My day herding was over. I was about fifteen years old in age and about twenty five in experience.

I saw in uncle John in 1884, as he had followed a horse thief from El Paso, Texas, to old [Tescoso?] on the Canadian River, 700 miles and was taking him back to El Paso. I never saw uncle John any more but I always held him high in my mind as his idea was, "Treat the other man right and make him treat you right or let you alone."

My dad never had a gun. If he had one, it was no account and he never had any ammunition to shoot with. I guess I took the idea from uncle John as I went to work for

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myself at fifteen years old and I have owned a good gun all my life. With luck I have never had to use it. The main thing is, be prepared, look the other fellow in the eye and be so you can tell him how the boss eat the cabbage and you are all right in any man's camp. I am 74 years old now and still like to feel the old girl as a pal.

I want to say this, I have been in El Paso two years and have met several old timers. Everyone that knew John Selman spoke highly of him as a citizen. Every one said he was a good law officer and they didn't know he was any kin to me. He had lots of ups and downs and had a hard life. May his soul rest in peace. It took men like him to tame the west and they done a 6 good job. Look, read of El Paso 50 years ago. Look at her today, 1938. John Selman helped tame her. He was my uncle both ways.

Buster De Graftenreid

Malrose, New Mexico 1 [ELLIOTT, PW?]

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El Paso, Texas 5555 words

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CONSULTANT: Buster "Dad" De Graftenreid EXPERIENCES OF A COWBOY Here I am in El Paso with all the comforts anyone would want or need but I am lonesome as the folks are out having a good time, which is right, so after reading the papers and listening to the radio, I still can't sleep.

In running back over my past life, and everything is in the past now, I am thinking I was just one of the old hands that didn't amount to much at the start and still [less?] at the wind up or last drive.

I am an old man now and I look back over the old trail and see it as it was in 1879. I was 15 years old then and on my own.

I worked for Causey in a buffalo camp that winter and in the spring and summer of 1880, J. [?]. Lynch came in with about 1500 head of southern Texas cattle and turned them loose at Spring Lake, just in Texas and not far from the New Mexico line.

Causey was through with his hunting then as the buffalo was a thing of the past so I went down to the cow outfit and asked for work. I didn't think anything of it at that time but I remember now how the boys looked at me rather funny and one of them asked me when I got away and how. I said I had been working George Causey in a buffalo camp north and the work was over and he would now take his kill to Kansas City and sell out. One of the men said do all the men and boys who work for Causey look and dress like you do, and I said I don't know why? and he said your clothes are at least three sizes too big, did you ever have a bath or have you ever had your hair cut and I know you never saw a razor. Now I would give most anything to have a picture of myself at that time. C12- Tex. 2 I was small built, around 100 pounds, my hair down my neck and as black as a Mexican's, fuzz on my face as I had never shaved and the bare spots were covered with freckles.

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The boys called me "Blackie" right off. Well they all seemed to be old hands and all cow men know an old hand isn't worth a dam to work. He just seems to know too much and the boss can't or won't fire him.

Hugh Leaper was Boss and he hired me and said they were all busy riding and I could keep the cook in fuel, such as mosquito and cow chips and help with the other chores which was [to rustle?] the horses of mornings and keep water in the buckets. The well was about 100 steps away and 8 men to wash and drink.

They played cards most all the time they were in camp and it was, kid, put some chips in the stove it is cold back here, fix that light which was a cup or pan with tallow and a twisted cotton string down in the grease, one end sticking out and it gave a very good light and plenty of smoke.

After awhile grass got good, horses fat and the main man and / owner of the cattle came out, J. [?]. Lynch, who lived at Las Vegas, N. M. I knew him and he remembered me as he had stayed over night at my fathers house on the Alamogordo, 18 miles north of Fort Sumner. He told me about my folks the first I had heard from them in 8 months and it seemed to me five years. I slipped off by myself that night and had a good cry for my ma. My two brothers always called me ma's boy and thought I could not do the things they did, but as I look back I realize I could and did out ride and out rope either of them.

J. W. Lynch started the wagon out and started branding calves. He was short of men as several had gone out as [str y?] men to other wagons to [represent?] him. The lynch brand was and his outfit was called the A. 3 When we were getting our horses issued to us, I heard Mr. Lynch tell Hugh Leapper Leaper , the boss, to give the kid the little ponies as he was raised on a pony and can show you Big Boys things you never saw before, because he has put in 8 months with George Causey and Causey knows these plains as well as any Indian. Causey told me he kept the kid with him and he would bet he could tell the kid [where?] was a certain lake and describe it [?] miles north and to go over there and see if

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there was any water in it. He might be gone four or five days but he sure can tell you when he gets back.

[Those?] days there no trails or bushes, just grass and/l and level country. Now and then a big dry lake. To find water, the easiest way would be to watch the mustangs as they know the nearest watering places.

I had carried a rope most of my life and had roped everything from a rabbit to a cow and horse and I was [tops?] as a calf roper. I never was a rodeo man.

We worked and branded calves until fall, I think it was November. Anyway the freight wagons had made several trips back and forth from the rail road at Colorado City and Midland. I sent to town and got me some clothes and a real outfit it was in those days; a \$50.00 saddle, some good boots and a Stetson Hat and a \$40.00 six gun and a belt and then I felt equal to any man and told them so. I still believe in being prepared so you can look the other fellow in the eye and tell him how the bore eat the cabbage. “

Now I want to say this, [that?] I dont think all men who were called cow and horse thieves were any such things. In some instances they just 4 got even with the outhur outfit. I will try to explain it in my way of thinking and you can judge for yourself. It was all open range and cattle would drift in a storm or a dry spell, looking for water as there never was a cow or horse that starved for water on open range. It was 80 miles north to the brakes and on the Canadian river all in the north brakes was big outfits such as the L S, L I T, 101, [O?] and worlds of smaller outfits. Their cattle would come up on the plains in a rainy season, drift from one lake to another as the water would play out and some would be [50?] to a hundred miles from the home range. The north men would send their men and wagon south to scout and get the cattle and bring them back to their ranches. Suppose it was the 101 wagon and ranch man on the [Simeone?] in New Mexico. They would gather all cattle belonging north and in such drives they got everything if us little men were not on the job our cattle went north, they didnt seem see them and of course it is customary that,

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if there is a yearling or anything without a brand, it is supposed to belong to the range it is on. There has been more trouble and killing over this than anything as each outfit claimed too big a range.

Say a man working for the and the cattle frift in from the north, stay there all summer, that winter those calves would be weaned and of course the A outfit would put their brand on them, knowing they were not theirs in a way.

A good cowboy would start him a brand of his own and just as soon as the boss found this out he would fire him but nine time out of ten this old boy would start on his own and usually there is hell to pay as it so proved. 5 I was still just a kid, say 17 years old when J. W. Lynch fired two men that had started a brand of their own. There was lots of stray cattle on our range and there would be a large number of unbranded stuff, so when he fired these two, the other six quit and when he went to settle up with these they wouldn't take his check. They wanted the money and naturally he didn't have it and they wouldn't let him go to Las Vegas after it nor wouldn't let him have the horses they had been riding. They chewed the rag for two or three days and it got worse. Finally he asked me what I was going to do and I told him when he was through with me I was going home. He asked me if I wasn't in with the other boys and I told him I had nothing to do with it and his check was alright with me as I supposed he had fired me with the rest of them. He said no , you are still working but the rest of them are not.

The next morning Mr. Lynch told me he wanted ne to go to Las Vegas and get the money so he could settle with the boys. Las Vegas was 200 miles northwest. The way I would have to go from our ranch to Fort Sumner was 90 miles from there to Las Vegas, 120 miles in those days. I had a good horse and ranches to stay every night. I stayed two nights and one day with my ma. and family on the AAlamogordo Alamogordo and maybe you think my ma was not glad to see her boy and I was so glad to see her and my two sisters. I had been gone two years and it seemed a life time.

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I got to Las Vegas on time and stayed two days. Mrs. Lynch fitted me out with real clothes. First was a silk suit of underwear and then a wide silk belt sewed to my clothes, then another suit of flannels and a good heavy over shirt and a pair of overshoes and a 6 sheep lined overcoat and some mittens.

Mrs. Lynch told me the best way to go , going back. I was to go north by the Bell ranch, from there to a store they called [Endee?], I would go on top of the plains there and on to Spring lake. No road, nothing but the level plains. Mrs. Lynch said this is the 11th of December and you are to be at Horse Lake the 16th and stay there until J. [?]. meets you. Do you know where Horse Lake is? I said yes, Horse Lake is 5 miles north of the ranch and its 75 miles from [Endee?] to the ranch and no road.

She gave me several letters for J. [?]. and said for God sake be careful and be there on the 16th as it might mean his life. I told her not to be afraid as those old boys [would?] not hurt him, they just want the horses and he cant can't afford to sell them.

Everything went fine and I made time alright. It snowed all day the 14th but wasnt very cold. I got to [Endee?] just at dark. Days are short in December.

There was a man and woman at [Endee?] named Curtis. I got well acquainted with them afterward. The Curtis woman got drowned when helping him with a bunch of cattle crossing the Canadian River when it was up. Curtis siad [said?] she must have struck quick sand as both she and her horse drowned before he could save her. He got her out but she was dead. He never got the horse or saddle. Said the horse never did even come up as the sand covered him up. Old Curtis never did get over his wifes death. He was well fixed at one time in the cow business. He ranched on the [Tiaban?], east of Fort Sumner. He died in [1938?] at Fort Sumner broke and hating the world and everyone in it as he had lost in a big way. 7 Well getting back to my story, I had a lunch fixed and lit out. The morning of the 15th was cold but clear. The sun was shining most of the day and I got my

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directions and headed straight southeast. Saw lots of cattle that had drifted south and as there was some snow they were doing fine.

I didnt see any mustangs that day. I rode until dark, found a deep dry lake with [quite?] a lot of bear grass stalks. I unsaddled my horse and staked him. He was tired and thirsty. He didnt know anything about [eathing?] snow. If he had been a cow pony he would have been all set as there was plenty, just now and then a clear place. I prepared for the night by gathering lots of those stalks and made a little fire. Got [?] me a good big snow ball and held it close to the fire and when it started to melt I got all the water I wanted to eat with my lunch.

I fared much better than the horse as he had been used to a good warm stable and plenty of corn and oats. Just a lot of snow didnt suit him and he was just as nervous and shook all over. He would look and breathe hard. I would lead him off and as long as I [would?] stand by him he would graze but the moment I would go to the saddle by the fire, he would come and stand just as close to me as he could.

I was'nt to say cold, but not comfortable enough to sleep very much. After so long a time the old morning star came up and then I felt good as I knew I had my directions straight. I finished burning up the stalks, then saddled up as the horse seemed as anxious to get started as myself. I got my bearing and struck out. The sun came up clear and along about eleven oclock, by the sun, I began to see 8 mustangs and knew by that I was going toward water. Soon I came in sight of lakes I recogonized and then I realized I was about 20 miles from the ranch.

It was a great relief to know exactly where I was and I stopped and unsaddled. I was tired and sleepy so I found a clear spot and stretched out. I must of slept three hours and I think the horse did to as he lay down.

After getting a good sleep I got up and started out in a high [lope?]. I soon struck the draw Horse Lake was on and I went down the draw until I came to the lake. There was lots of

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water and quite a few cattle. They had broken the ice and I watered the horse. He sure was dry as he was'nt used to going without water for 48 hours like the range ponies.

I rode down the draw until it turned east aways from the ranch, then I could see the big white sand hills just north of the ranch. It was getting late and I couldnt see any one. I waited about a half hour and I noticed my horse looking east and I saw someone but from the wrong direction. It I got on my horse and rode out of sight knowing I could outrun him, if it was'nt J. W. He said he saw I was about to high tail it so he took off his coat and waved it in the right way, which was around and then down, I then knew for sure it was J. W.

The first thing he said was, you young coyote you made it, how are you? How is my wife and Ruby. That was his girl. I gave him the letters and as we rode along he read the one from his wife and began to laugh and said I guess all women are afraid. 9 Well we fooled the boys [alright?]. They were waiting and watching the road and had been for several hours. We rode on over to the ranch and the boys seemed glad to see me and the first thing they asked was which way did you come, how and when? I told them and they looked blank and said it was 80 or 90 miles to [Endos?] and not a dam switch between here and there.

Well after good dark the last two boys came in and maybe you think their eyes didnt bug out when they say me. After supper and the dishes cleaned off the table, J. [?]. told them he was ready to pay them off. He got his time book and had their time all ready figured out and asked every one if it was right as he read off their names. Each one said yes. [Then?] he turned to me and said now you give me that money that you have and I said if I've got any money I dont know it. He told me to pull off my overshirt and we will see. [Well?] [Sir?], that belt was full of bills: 2, 5, 10 and 20's to the amount of \$1250.00. I never saw so much money before in my life and neither had the other boys. He paid the boys and they all agreed that he did'nt owe them a cent. [Then?] he said, I'm telling you boys this outfit belongs to me, horses and all and after breakfast I want every dam one of you to leave here. I [am?] now holding the winning hand and will play it to the limit. Up until now you

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had the winning hand but you played it out. Someone said, Hell, lets forget it and have a good game [?] of draw poker as the kid has brought [?] three new decks of cards.

That started a poker game and about midnight I was broke and sleepy and went to bed. The next morning some of the boys was still in the game and some broke. 10 Lynch and the Boys quarreled all day over a brand the boys had started. It was [A-?] and Lynchs brand was [A-?]. They had it up and down but didnt do anything.

Lynch got ready to start home to Las Vegas and said he would be back as soon as he could and bring more men. He told me to ride every day and watch out and see if they brand or make [A-?] out of [A-?]. If so you put the [A-?] back on and what I do will be plenty. I will stay all night at Carters tonight, get one of them to go to Fort Sumner and on if necessary. It is up to you until I get back, so do the best you can, good bye. And he was gone.

There was six men. [Four?] of them afoot. Harry Blocker had a horse and Comstock also. They both left going [south?] to town. That left [Tom?] Pridemore, Hugh Leaper, John [Bull?], [Tom?] Ellis and Old Mike the cook.

Harry Blocker and Comstock had won most of the money, hence the hurry to get to town and away. The others stayed and played cards as it was about even with them.

Hugh Leaper, the [?] Boss, had started the [A-?] brand and these four men were to be [pardners?] in it and they had fallen out over the way things had gone.

I sold Hugh Leaper my private horse for \$50.00 and he bought the [A-?] interest in the cattle, giving each \$15.00 and sole me the brand for \$60.00. They all signed the bill of sale, signed by Old Mike. I borrowed \$10.00 from Tom Pridemore and Hugh left for Fort Sumner. I never saw him any more but I [heard?] plenty as he would up in Santa Fe. 11 I loaned the other boys horses to ride with the promise they would send them back and in

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good shape and they did. Men's word was good them days in such deals, but not so good now.

Tom Pridemore mas gone 10 or 15 days and came back.

I got ahead on my story but I want to tell about the time just before Christmas, we had killed a fat yerling for beef. Three men were there and of course Old Mike. We got after Mike to make a cake or pie as it was Christmas. He said how in the hell would you make a cake without sugar or milk, just sour dough is all we have. I got to prouling around the store room where the flour and stuff was kept and found 3 cans of tomatoes, 2 cans of corn and some prunes. Lots of beans but no bacon. The cook in the buffalo camp put tallow in the beans and they were good so we did likewise and he had a fine Christmas dinner.

Tom told me to get the bucket and he would saddle up his horse and rope that cow we killed the yerling of. Her bag was full of milk and I was right there with the bucket. He rode around lose and laid the rope on her and she was just as gentle as could be. I milked her and rubbed and patted her good. That night [Tom?] walked out there a foot, pitched the rope on her and we put her in the lot with the horses and fed her corn and hay. She got so gentle she would come to the kitchen door and eat anything we would put out for her. She was a pretty little thing and we called her "Punkins". This is the first cow I ever stole. I will tell you how it was later.

Olk Mike the cook, left just after Christmas. The freight wagon [come?] by and had supplies for us. Flour, coffee, sugar, can corn and tomatoes, 12 prunes, dried apples, matches, 10 Pounds of Bull-Durham and plenty of brown papers. But I believe I was [?] out of [the?] 3 boxes of 44 cartridges as I only had 3 in my gun and I would not shoot them at anything.

They had 1500 pounds of corn and a letter from J. W. to me telling me to feed the horses light, just so they would be ing in good shape in the spring as all the cattle had drifted

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south and he couldn't do anything with them until grass come so/ we [could?] work. He said he would be there in April sometime.

Well the cattle had'nt drifted as bad as we thought as we were feeding 10 head of saddle horses and they were good [ponies] and fat. Tom and myself got right on the [job?], would go south just as far as possible, start the cattle back and they would come on in to water as there was fine grass everywhere and big sand hills south and the cattle would stop in them out of the wind and then [they?] would drift out as the sand would be too cold on their feet and they would'nt lay [down?]. Snow stayed in the big sand hills all winter so cattle and mustangs ate snow and stayed fat.

Well in April, J. W. came with a wagon and some more horses and 5 men. Mostly hack drivers and bright like boys and a brand new boss. His name was Joe Fuller. He was supposed to be a killer and all around bad umbery. He had on two guns and a pair of big [black?] chaps shaps made out of goat hide. The rest of the boys had big [chaps?] and big hats. They wore their shaps all the time and each one had a slicker (they called it rain coat) which they kept tied behind their saddle. If me or Tom had one it was always in the wagon if we needed it. It hardly ever rained anyway. 13 anyway. We found shaps to hot and [clumsy?] and there was'nt a bush in 50 miles and I could'nt see any use for shaps if I'd had them. None of the old plains boys wore them.

[We?] we learned Lynch had sold the [A-?] she cattle and ranch to Lee and Fost, two lawyers at Las Vegas. Young Vic Lee would be in charge after we counted and turned over the [A-?] cattle. Lynch would hold the steers and LJ cattle and trail them over into New Mexico to a ranch he had bought on the Jondose about 12 miles below Puertaluna, a thriving little Mexican town and about 12 miles from my [dads?] ranch.

Our horses had wintered good and wild and hard to ride. Tom and I had our pick of mounts. We each got 8 horses after Joe [Fuller?] picked his. He was a big man, weighed

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about 200 pounds. He picked the big ones and then the fun started as the bigger the horse the harder they are to ride.

J. [?]. was a big man too. I guess he [weighed?] 200 or more. He had his two buggy horses and a saddle horse. He didnt need [much?] of a mount as all he did was brag of what he had done and would do. Those boys that Mr. Lynch brought out could'nt rope, or do much of anything else but talk but if they [did?] catch a horse at all it would be around his belly and all hell could'nt hold him. There would be three or four of them holding the roap and laughing fit to kill. That was alright as long as they were / in the corral.

[Well?] we got [everything?] loaded on the wagon and we pulled out for Yellow House Canyon, the DZ ranch owned [by?] [Numan?] and Tramble. The other outfits would be there. We went about 10 miles and stopped for dinner. 14 Everyone unsaddled and turned their horses loose. J. [?]. noticed it and asked Joe who he had to rustle horses and Joe said, why Buster, the kid, he has been driving them up and I told him he had'nt said anything to me about it and I had turned my horse loose, thinking he had told some one to keep his horse. J. [?]'s face sure did turn red when me and Tom looked at him and grinned. Then he fell apart and cussed the whole outfit and then some. To keep out of it I got a muzzle with some corn in it and went out to Old Barney, the horse I rode from Vegas, held it where he could see the [muzzle?] and hear the corn rattle and here he come. As I slipped the muzzle on his nose, the rope went over his head.

Just as I got back to the wagon the cook hollered Chuck and the Hack Driver Boys made good hands there alright. I filled up my plate and got back to one [side?] so I could hold the rope on my horse and Joe brought his plate and sat down close to me and said, Buster from now on you will take care of the horses. Now I was falling from a top cow hand to [the?] low degree of a horse wrangler. It made me so mad at first I was completely dumb and couldnt say anything. About that time old Tom gave one of his big nigger laughs and says boy, you are climbing but down. Then I told Joe I would take care of them just one

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time and that would be when I [rounded?] them in as I have done quit and want have to catch anything but my pack of horse.

After dinner I told J. [W?]. I would [quit?] and settle up and while we were talking Tom came up and said J. W. if you owe me anything make out my time as I am with Buster. J. W. went all to pieces and said, I 15 wont won't settle up with either of you and I will run this outfit myself and said to me to drive the horses in and we will be on our way.

When I got the horses to the wagon, Tom had the boys lined up with ropes and I drove them in. J. W. told Tom to rope each man a horse out of their mount and to be dam sure he is gentle as we hav'nt time to run a horse loose with a saddle. Tom must have done a good job as we didnt have any trouble.

We three got [together?] and talked it over and as J. W. said he would be boss and have Tom as his straw boss and put Joe boss of day herds and he wouldnt know any better. [We?] [then?] had a big laugh and everything was all fine again.

I often think now of how mean and onery I was to those [green?] boys. They thought they knew everything and thought it great fun with nothing to do but ride a [pony?], but they soon found out. I remember how they were always chasing mustangs or antelope, just to see them run.

When Tom would rope his horse out and put his rope on him and tell them not to let him get away from you and so on until the last horse was caught and then the fun [commenced?]. The poor devils didnt know how to hold and saddle a half wild pony. You have to hold him with one hand and saddle him with the other. I would saddle up first, have everything ready and watch. I would have a loop all ready made and my rope ties to my saddle horn. If the pony didnt get away from him while he was trying to get on he would pitch and about the fifth jump he would throw the old boy off and away he would start. 16 I would be right at him and just as he left the pony I would be there with my rope ready. Never throw at the ponys head but rope the saddle and boy would I wreck things. Three

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times out of five I would tear his cheap saddle up, such as jerking the horn off or breaking the cinch and straps. Just plain mean [was?] all I was.

We old hands had our guns in our beds and went as light as possible. [The?] town boys caught on and done the same as they saw their chaps were too hot and heavy to pack.

One morning one of the boys ponies threw him off and I roped the saddle and jerked him down two or three times and in some way [the?] pony made a run by Tom and he threw his loop and Joe Fuller was standing just in front of Tom and he caught Jo's pony around the neck. About that time I gave too much slack and there was two pony's a man and two six [runs?] all piled up and I want to say it was some mix up. It seemed just as one would get up the other would jerk him down and for five minutes all I could do was laugh. Old Tom said all of my money is on Joe as he is under the bottom most of the time and not doing a thing, pull your pony out of the way so Joe can get up and then I come to myself and jerked him [back?] out of the way.

A kid by the name of Tatos who was borned and reared in Las Vegas told me [that?] Joe was doing a great deal of plotting as to what he was going to do.

I nicknamed Tatos "Coyote". He was red headed and all Irish. He talked good Mex. He was about 17 which was about my own age. We soon became good friends and in later years he made a real cow boy. 17 It seemed that Joe had it in for me in a big way. I was just a kid and small, but some bullies are that way.

Coyotes horse fell with him one day [and?] [ran?] off with his saddle. I went after the pony on the dead run. He went south and our ranch was north. I knew there was a ranch at Silver Lake about 20 miles south. I knew [the?] only way to catch him was wear him out and he would turn back as I could'nt run on to him.

Late that evening I commenced to see cattle and more cattle and I then had a good idea that the ranch was within 8 or 10 miles. I saw a man driving four or five cattle and I rode

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up to him and he was driving up the milk cows. After telling him my troubles he said there were some horses close to where we were and that we would give him a run to them because if it gets dark you will lose him. This we did and he was [tired?] we knew he would stay with the other horses so we let him alone and went on to the ranch just under the hill out of sight of Silver Lake. It was one of Numans and Trambles DZ ranches.

There were three hands at the ranch and they had 5 buffalo calves [raising?] them. [These?] cows I [mentioned?] were [wild?], they didnt milk them, just turned them in the little pen and I want to say I got a lesson. Those cows tried to fight the calves but a buffalo calf sucks from behind the cows. One calf will run to her side and ram his head or nose between her hind legs and grab a tit and swing on. The cow kicked and whirled around but the calves stayed [right?] there. The boys said they were not a bit of trouble and about three months old. They would turn them out with the cows and they would try to suck everything they could get to. 18 These are fine boys and glad to see a stranger and we got news both ways.

Next morning one of the boys rustled horse and went and attended the cows and calves. Myself and the others had chuck ready after the chores were done. Then we went out about three miles and saw the pony I was after. He was with a [bunch?] of cattle. We divided two on either side, leaving a big space between us and finally we closed in on him and he started west and north. The ranch pen and horse were south west. He had about half a mile start. I was south and east, the two boys started after him and I said [?] good bye, but not so. They took him [about?] five miles and turnedd turned him towards the ranch ang begin to croud in on him and when I got to them they had their ropes made into a good big loop and was laying it on that pony about right. He was glad to find the gate and then everything was alright again.

I had heard about the [Newman?] and Tramble horses being stool dust stock and race horses. I know they were the best I had ever seen at that time. They were all bays and [sorrels?].

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The boys wanted me to lay over and rest but we were short handed and Tom would have to make two hands as the hack driver cow boys would get lost if they got out of [sight?] of the herd.

It was about 20 miles back. They had moved on about eight miles to another lake and a road there that went by big Salt Lake in New Mexico. I got to the wagon just as the second guard was going on. I sure was tired and hungry. Old Coyote stood my guard and his too, making it half of the night. He borrowed one of the boys saddles at night but rode bare back in the day on day herd.

The next morning I missed Joe and asked about him. They said a freight wagon came by and he had quit and gone with them. I said that 19 was just too bad, he wasn't [even?] a good day herder. J. W. said, you are a dam lier, he can sure see that the girls are on the [hob?] and a full seat every dance and he can call the shortest sets, he is all right as a rouster. You and Tom are to blame and now you will have to do the work of three men.

We were up in the [?] range and [Estes?] Brothers three or four stray men came to our wagon and it made it easier on Tom and myself as they well mounted and good cow boys. [We?] played lots of pranks on the hack driver boys but it was an education to them and most of them turned out to be real fellows.

We got back to the ranch, branded out the [A?] cattle. Vick Lee just [a?] [on?] the shoulder as a talley brand, as the outside men came in with what they had they were tallied out and turned loose.

The [Synvicate?] was fencing their land and all ranchers would have to move out.

George Causey with his J-B cattle moved south. The Carter Brothers moved from the Black Water to the Fria [Blanco?] in New Mexico. Vick Lee with his AL [cattle?] moved to [Coyote?] Lake in New Mexico.

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Our herd was [ready?], the LJ and [A-?] steers and stock cattle. I had gathered the [A+?] that I had bought from the four boys for [\$60.00?] There were 72 head of [?] [?], less than a dollar a head and I was in the cow business to stay.

Now I will tell this story as I started it. The owners of a ranch learning their men to steal as J. W. did me - there were lots of stray cattle that belonged to big companies north and J. W. would tell me or Tom we will have to have a beef so we would get a big fat calf unbranded. [When?] we found one [weaned?] we would put a [A-?] on it which was all right[,?] it was on his [ranch?]. 20 Well we started our herd and Vick Lee and his men cut our herd. We pulled out [and?] went about 7 miles and camped for the night. J. W. came to me and told me all about the ranch he had brought and what we would do and so on and said now you know where the little milk cow runs and can find her. Lee wont see our herd any more and I doubt it if he could tell a cow from a steer if he does. I went back and in no time I found the little [milch?] cow and put her in our herd as third guard was comin off at 8 a. m. no one saw me but J. W. He was standing my guard.

We made coffee and never went to bed as he was a great talked and finally got down to what he had on his mind and said you know there are 8 or 10 head of those A4 cattle with the A4 brand that were burned out of the A6, now I have made [?] up my mind, as I like you, not to do anything about it and [?] we will be pardners in the A4 brand. I never said a word but just went and unrolled my bed, buckled on my gun. By that time the boys were all coming alive as the cook had hollered Chuck. I caught old Barney, the horse Mrs. Lynch had given me the time I went to Las Vegas, I walked up to J [?.] and said, I want to tell you here and now, J. W. that you are a dam lier if you think or say there is a single one of those A4 that ever has been an [??]. I called him everything I could think of and he would stutter and try to fix it up by saying he might be mistaken and that we must not fall out as you and Tom and myself are good friends and what one does is alright with the others, isn't it Tom? Tom says, now dont don't talk to me and walked off.

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It was about five miles on to George [??] ranch and he was holding his cattle fixing to move. I told him my troubles and there were 21 two of the Carter boys there [?] Causey told Lee to cut them all out to their [?] selves and make J. W. pass on them and if J. W. finds or claims my one rope it and me and the two Carter boys will pass on it.

We all four met the herd and I told J. W. what I wanted to do. He said, Hell, forget it and lets be friends. I had rather give you 8 or 10 cattle than to have you mad at me. Tom told him, you are not giving him a dam thing, I have looked at them A4 cattle and they are straight. There never was but one [A-?] made into A4 and I killed it. The A4 cattle are straight, nothing sucking, all weaned. My name is on that bill of sale he bought the [??] A4 brand and I am telling you J. W. and the rest of you, pointing his hand at Causey and the two Carter boys, if the A4 hadn't been put on them they would have went four ways, pointing his hand at J. W. and Causey and the two Carter boys.

I told Tom what Causey said about cutting them out and he said, sure that in the best so he rounded up the herd. We cut them all out. Tom looked them over good and then told J. W. to do the same. J. W. said he didn't want to as they were alright but Tom said you started this and now you have got to stop it here and now. Each man went in and looked the cattle over and said they were straight A4 cattle. Tom made a note of it and what month and year and had J. W., Causey and the Carters sign it and everything was OK and Tom said to one of the boys to throw them in the herd and take them on home as it is only 70 miles from their ranch to dads. Tom said it is [only?] 12 miles from where we will turn them loose which is close and will be nearer home. I am running this outfit and J. W. will have to fire me first, so throw them in and lets all go to dinner. I didn't even have a cup of coffee. Things were 22 not looking so good. J. W. and Tom started for the wagon and dinner. George Causey and myself followed. George told me to just go on as before and asked me what caused mine and Lynchs trouble. I told him all about the cow I had went back after and then when Lynch said what he did that I just lost my head and told him everything as I was afraid of him as he had told me so much about how bad he was and

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what he would do and had done. Causey told me to just go on and be careful and dont let Lynch ever get anything on you and you can hold your own - size dont count - you have the difference.

The next morning J. W. pulled out for Las Vegas and we trailed the herd on over to the John de [?] ranch and turned them loose the last of Oct. 1884.

That little yellow milch cow was the first cow I ever stole and while with Causey going out before we struck buffalo Causey and me killed a beef, a stray he called it.

My dad was honest and went broke in the cow game in New Mexico.

The two men I worked for stole and had me steal for them and I know I never burned a brand or stole cattle, just big unbranded yearlings. I worked for J. [?.] Lynch three years and can say this, I never put my brand on anything except my own stuff on his range. I worked as outside man all the time and when Tom wasn't [?] there I was straw boss.

Now this finishes the story of the first cow I ever stole and it was for the other man. 23 I may write and tell things that [?] happened and the fun [?] and myself had that winter of 1884 - 1885 at Old Puerta Luna, N. Mexico, just 7 miles away and a dandy little Mexican town with lots of pretty girls, big store, hotel and saloon [?] other and our credit good and we hadn't been to town for nearly three years to blow in our money. We showed those sheep herders what two top cow boys could do and they let us show but they got the money while we got a headache. The was good old days! 1 #20

ELLIOTT, P.W.

JUN [6?] 1938

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1750 words

[MY?] PIONEER EXPERIENCES CONTRIBUTED

By

Buster De Graftenreid

In 1864 I come to Texas in Grayson County and from what my Pa and Ma said, I give up the squack and bawled like two years old and they named me Buster. Pa and Ma moved to Stephen County and my first recollection I have is herding a small bunch of our cattle to keep them together and no one steal or run them off.

I rode a little pony mare and she always had a cold every year. When I would start out with the cattle, after ma had milked, she would hand me my lunch, which was a pone of corn bread, and say to me, "Now you be sure and be a good boy and stay on your pony. If you don't you will get to playing and the Indians will catch you," and I want to say now, that fear in still with me.

Also what she told me about Jesus and God taking care of all good boys. She planted the thoughts of Jesus in my heart and his goodness has been with me these many years.

What I want to say, is this, how those families got by, I can't see. There were three families lived on the Clear Fork of the Brazos River, it emptied its water in the main Brazos 2 River about thirty miles below.

Now, in looking back and even what I know at that time, as I must of been 9 or 10 years old, my uncle John Selman, my mother's brother and his wife, my Pas' sister, lived with his family about half a mile away. I thought at that time, uncle John was everything and could and did things. If it had not been for Uncle John and a few men like him, the Comanchie Indians would of got all of us. Uncle John was a fighter and they knew it and so did those thieving white men. As the Indians killed the Lee family, the old man, old lady and carried off two grown girls and a small boy about seven years old.

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Uncle John went with the soldiers which were at Fort Griffin, twenty miles up the Clear Fork River. Uncle John got the neighbors, a few cowboys and when they were digging the grave, some one found a young girl dead, shot in the back with an arrow. I heard Uncle John say he couldn't pull the arrow out so he cut it off and bent it over, they put the three in one big grave, just wrapped up in some old quilts the Indians wouldn't take. They took the feather beds and emptied the feathers out and took the ticking an they needed the cloth for their own use.

As it was only three miles below our house, I would take the cattle down that way so I could see the grave. My uncle John was a good man and stood for fair play. He went with the soldiers and different scouts after horse thieves.

I recall, one time, he come by where I was herding cattle. 3 Him and three soldiers, negroes. They had two white soldiers as prisoners. They had deserted and as uncle John knew the country, it seems the captain sent uncle John to get them. He had them tied together so they couldn't run in the brush and get away. They had one pack mule and it was heavily packed with grub and some bedding. I was sure sorry for the two men as they was walking while uncle John and the negroes were riding.

They didn't seem to care one bit as they were anxious. They said they were sure glad to see a white man if he did have three negro soldiers with him as they were about to starve and had to stay hid and afraid to shoot to kill anything to eat as they saw Indians. One of them said, "I have still got my hair and all I ask is to get back to the fort where I can eat and sleep in peace. The woods are full of Indians. We could see them in the day time and we would stay hid in the thick brush and briers. At night we could hear them grunt while looking for us."

I was always glad when uncle John was around as he had a good gun and would kill deer and turkey. [The?] woods were full of them. In the winter he would kill hogs and what a time we would have, as my two brothers, Creed and [?], was going to school at Fort Griffin.

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Twenty miles in those days was all day in a wagon drawn by a big yoke of steers, big and fat. The steers belonged to Pa and the wagon was uncle John's. It cost money to get a wagon. Pa raised the steers and us boys broke them to work when they were yearlings, dragging wood to cook with and keep warm. When the wood played out so we couldn't keep a good fire, Pa would move to more wood. Good idea, he did not have to worry one bit, see?

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I think my Ma was the only one that worried as she was afraid the Indians would get me or I would get lost and starve. She didn't know how smart her boy was. I could and did outsmart the Indians. I know they didn't want to kill me. They either wanted to see me run and hide or wanted to catch me just to see what I looked like. They might have thought I was one of them as all I had on in the summer time was a shirt three or four sizes too big, no shoes, no hat and my hair down to my shoulders. I would give anything if I had a picture of myself as I can see now in my imagination when I was a boy.

I never thought of getting lost as the milk cows would go back to the calves that were left in the pen and I would drive the others after them and get home in fine shape. If it hadn't been for one old line back, redheaded cow, we call old Nance, I don't know so much. When I got hungry I would suck her by milking the milk in my mouth, fill up on good warm milk as I had either eaten or lost my corn bread.

My uncle John would go to Weatherford in Parker County, eighty miles to mill, they called it. If he had good luck, he would get back in fifteen days, but it nearly always rained and the creeks would get out of their banks and he couldn't ford them. I remember one time he was nearly a month. Both families run out of meal. Not one bit of bread. We had plenty meat such as chicken, squirrel and rabbit. Ma would make curd out of clabber milk and lots of butter. We could catch any size fish you wanted within thirty minutes.

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If you wanted a big fellow, fish deep with a big bait. The 5 big ones stayed on the bottom in water ten feet deep or more.

I remember Uncle John caught a big, yellow cat fish that weighed 123 pounds. That was the biggest fish I have ever saw.

My uncle John's wife, my aunt Edna, died in 1878 or 79. Uncle John left that part and moved his children, three boys and one girl up in the big ben country. My dad moved to Dickens County, and in 1882 Dad moved to New Mexico. My day herding was over. I was about fifteen years old in age and about twenty five in experience.

I saw in uncle John in 1884, as he had followed a horse thief from El Paso, Texas, to old Tescosa on the Canadian River, 700 miles and was taking him back to El Paso. I never saw uncle John any more but I always held him high in my mind as his idea was, "Treat the other man right and make him treat you right or let you alone."

My dad never had a gun. If he had one, it was no account and he never had any ammunition to shoot with. I guess I took the idea from uncle John as I went to work for myself at fifteen years old and I have owned a good gun all my life. With luck I have never had to use it. The main thing is, be prepared, look the other fellow in the eye and be so you can tell him how the [boss?] eat the cabbage and you are all right in any man's camp. I am 74 years old now and still like to feel the old girl as a pal.

I want to say this, I have been in El Paso two years and have met several old timers. Everyone that knew John Selman spoke highly of him as a citizen. Every one said he was a good law officer and they didn't know he was any kin to me. He had lots of ups and downs and had a hard life. May his soul rest in peace. It took men like him to tame the west and they done a 6 good job. Look, read of El Paso 50 years ago. Look at her today, 1938. John Selman helped tame her. He was my uncle both ways.

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Buster De Graftenreid

Melrose, New Mexico